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IDENTIFIERS

ABSTRACT

This module provides readers a broad view of the development of music and the plastic arts in Puerto Rico. At the same time, the module includes the names of Puerto Ricans who have found distinction in these fields of endeavor. A preassessment test, learning alternatives, postassessment test, and various narratives concerned with the theme of the module are included. (MJM)

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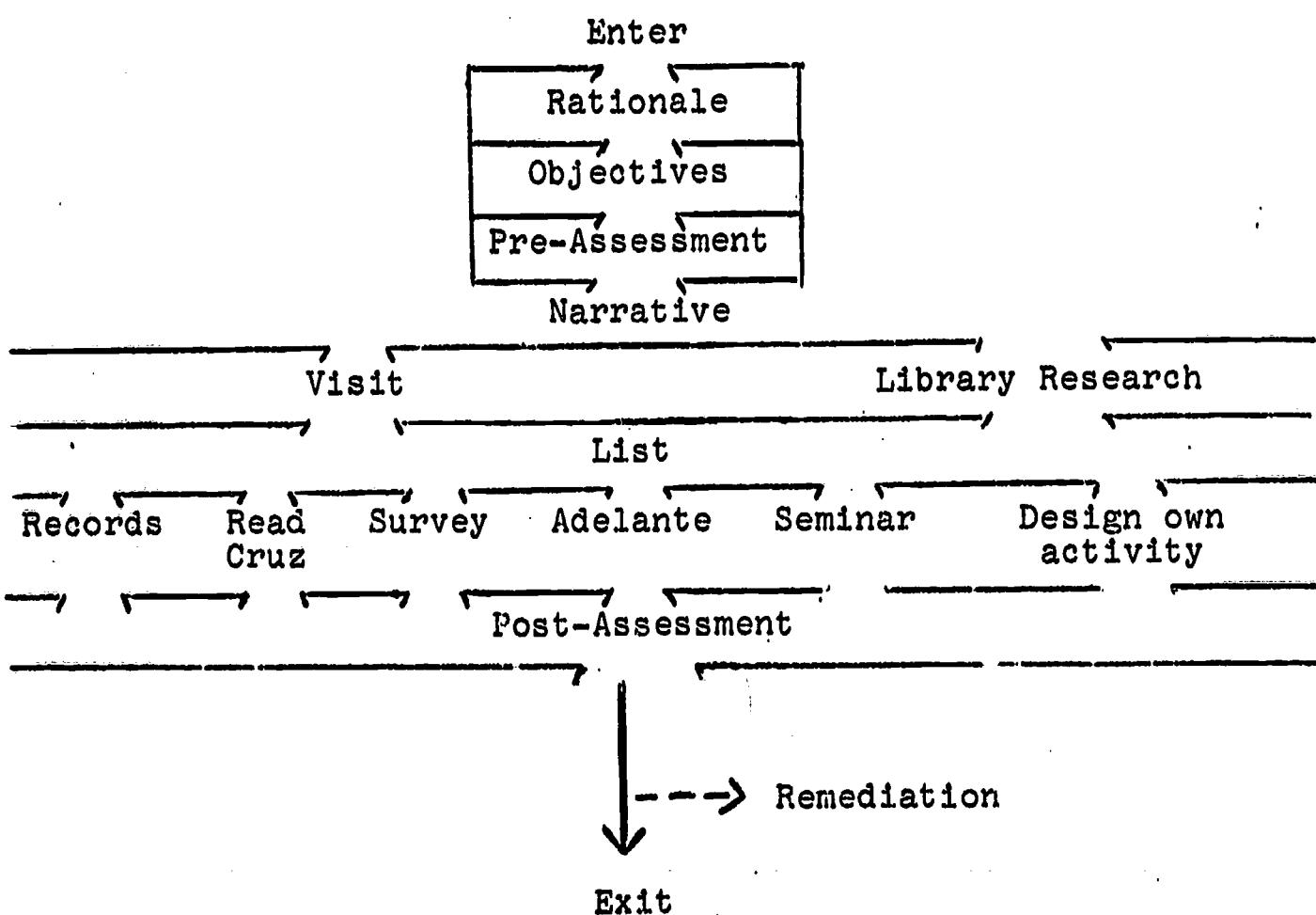
MODULAR SEQUENCE:  
PUERTO RICAN PUPILS  
IN MAINLAND SCHOOLS

TPP 003.12 THE PUERTO RICAN  
AND THE ARTS

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## THE PUERTO RICAN AND THE ARTS



### RATIONALE

This module provides the reader with a broad view of the development of music and the plastic arts in Puerto Rico. At the same time, the module includes the names of Puerto Ricans who have found distinction in these fields of endeavor. It is hoped the module will make the reader more aware of Puerto Rico's contribution to music and the plastic arts, which are so much a part of the Island's cultural heritage.

### OBJECTIVES

Given a series of learning alternatives on Puerto Rican Arts, the participant will be able to:

- discuss the cultural roots of Puerto Rican music and dances
- list the major concerns of Puerto Rican artists
- discuss the contributions of Puerto Rico's major artists

PRE-ASSESSMENT

To assess your prior mastery of the terminal objectives of this unit of work, complete the following exercise. Your performance on this assessment will determine which learning tasks you are to perform.

Directions: Answer the following in short essay form.

1. What countries share a common musical heritage with Puerto Rico?
2. What kind of music did Puerto Ricans, aristocrats and peasants, cultivate in the past?
3. Were Puerto Rico's social classes oblivious of each other's music?
4. How does mass media affect music in Puerto Rico?
5. What are some of the dances enjoyed by Puerto Ricans today?
6. What musical instruments did the Spaniards contribute to Puerto Rico's heritage?
7. How did Puerto Rico's Indians accompany their areytos?
8. What has Africa contributed to Puerto Rican music?
9. What are the most vital of Puerto Rico's folkloric musical forms?
10. When do Puerto Ricans celebrate with music?
11. What is a Black Baile de Bomba?
12. What sectors of Puerto Rican society foster musical activity?
13. Who are some of Puerto Rico's outstanding musicians?
14. How are plastic arts manifested in Puerto Rico?
15. What are the oldest examples of Puerto Rican art?

16. What kind of architecture dominates Puerto Rico's colonial period?
17. What is a bohio?
18. How did prosperity affect living conditions in the 18th and 19th centuries in Puerto Rico?
19. How do contemporary structures reflect U. S. influence in Puerto Rico?
20. What are the oldest examples of pictorial art in Puerto Rico?
21. What are santos?
22. Who was Puerto Rico's first formal painter?
23. What was Francisco Oller's contribution to Puerto Rico's artistic heritage?
24. How are the arts supported in Puerto Rico?
25. Name some of Puerto Rico's most outstanding artists.

### LEARNING ALTERNATIVES

- I. Read: "Puerto Rico and the Arts" by Rafael Ramirez de Arellano y Lynch. (included in the module)
- II. Select one of the following:
  - A. Visit the following museums in N.Y.:
    - El Museo del Barrio
    - The Metropolitan Museum of Art
    - The Museum of the American Indian
  - B. Visit the following museums and churches in San Juan:
    - La Casa del Arte
    - El Ateneo Puertorriqueño
    - La Iglesia de
    - Catedral de Santo Tomás de Aquino
  - C. Visit El Museo de Arte de Ponce.
  - D. Visit El Museo de Arte y Antropología de la Universidad de Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras.
  - E. Do library research on Puerto Rican Art.

Activity: Make a list of topics depicted by Puerto Rican artists past and present. What principal concerns do they express?

### III. Select one of the following:

- A. Listen to the following phonography records made available through the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña Box 4184 San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00905:
  - a) Puerto Rico presenta la música de Rafael Hernández (ICP-MP-I)
  - b) Música de Roberto Cole interpretada por Panchito Minguela
  - c) Tavárez y sus contemporáneos, interpreta: Irma Isern (ICP-AD-2)
  - d) Juan Morel Campos (ICP-AD-3)

- e) Braulio Dueño Colon y Rafael Balseiro Dávila,  
Mariá Luisa Muñoz (ICP-AD-4)
  - f) Jesús Figueroa y Narciso Figueroa (ICP-AD-8)
  - g) Navidad en Puerto Rico, by Jose A. Monrozeau
- B. Listen to the following records made available through Puerto Rican Heritage Publications, 802 Flushing Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.:
- a) Musica del pueblo puertorriqueno
  - b) Cancion del arte
- C. Read La música folklorica de Puerto Rico by Francisco López Cruz for additional information regarding people and topics covered in the module.
- D. Survey local record stores to determine their stock of Puerto Rican records.
- E. View "Adelante" on channel 30.
- F. Attend a seminar as scheduled by your module Facilitator.
- G. Design your own learning activity.

### POST-ASSESSMENT

Directions: Answer the following in short essay form.

1. What countries share a common musical heritage with Puerto Rico?
2. What kind of music did Puerto Ricans, aristocrats and peasants, cultivate in the past?
3. Were Puerto Rico's social classes oblivious of each other's music?
4. How does mass media affect music in Puerto Rico?
5. What are some of the dances enjoyed by Puerto Ricans today?
6. What musical instruments did the Spaniards contribute to Puerto Rico's heritage?
7. How did Puerto Rico's Indians accompany their areytos?
8. What has Africa contributed to Puerto Rican music?
9. What are the most vital of Puerto Rico's folkloric musical forms?
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19. How do contemporary structures reflect U. S. influence in Puerto Rico?
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22. Who was Puerto Rico's first formal painter?
23. What was Francisco Oller's contribution to Puerto Rico's artistic heritage?
24. How are the arts supported in Puerto Rico?
25. Name some of Puerto Rico's most outstanding artists.

Competency will be certified when your module coordinator has ascertained that the submitted post-assessment is of acceptable quality.

Remediation: Alternate learning activities are available on a contractual basis with the module coordinator.

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"The Puerto Rican and the arts"

Puerto Rican music, to a great extent, shares a common heritage with the countries of the West, and in particular with Spain and Latin America. The Spanish tradition, which was imported by the early settlers during the 16th century, has continued to the present day without interruption.

This European music, of the Spanish variety, was to have a two-fold expression in Puerto Rico, reflecting directly the hierarchical structure of the Island's society. The first expression was the folkloric music of the lower or peasant class; the other was that of the aristocracy or upper class.

The Island aristocracy would dance and sing to European dances and music which came to Puerto Rico by way of the visitors from the outside. Creole society evolved around officials of the Crown who set the pace and the tone of the social activities. Thus, in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, upper class Puerto Ricans would dance to the same tunes as their Spanish counterparts on the Peninsula, dances such as the minuet, rigadoon, mazurka, waltz, polka, lanciers and cotillion.

Yet these Puerto Rican aristocrats were not oblivious to a vital, local tradition of music and dance which flourished among the lower classes of society. In fact, there was an extensive amount of feedback between the dance and music of the two social classes, and as a consequence of this convergence were born dances and songs that were eventually shared

by the entire society. These particular musical forms were truly native in every sense. A representative example of this music would be the Puerto Rican danza of the 19th century. Even though the danza had a lot in common with other Caribbean forms, such as the upa and Cuban danzón, it incorporated local tunes and gained a high level of artistic expression in the compositions of Manuel A. Tavárez and Juan Morel Campos.

Nowadays the old hierarchical two-class system has broken down; Puerto Rico has a large middle class and historical forces have affected the development of dance and music in obvious ways. For instance, most Puerto Ricans dance to the same music, regardless of social class. Musical taste seems to be more a matter of the age group rather than of the social position. Another consideration is that Puerto Rico is now part of the U. S.; one third of all Puerto Ricans live outside of the Island, and many travel back and forth from the U. S. mainland bringing in dances and music which are then incorporated into the native culture. In addition, Puerto Rico enjoys a high standard of living and almost every home has at least one T.V. set and several radios. The music from radios and other electronic means bombards the people night and day during the hours of human activity, subjecting them constantly to musical innovations which are imported from other lands, especially from nearby islands, such as Hispaniola and Cuba.

Accordingly, popular music in Puerto Rico tends to follow international trends along Latin American, Caribbean and U. S. lines, together with the strong native traditions which continue to show considerable life. In the past, before the electronic media, such international trends would have been restricted mostly to the upper class.

The people attending a Puerto Rican fiesta will dance to international, U. S., Caribbean and Latin forms, such as the bolero, merengue, danzón, pachanga, cha-cha-cha, mambo, cumbia, pasodoble, rock, etc., but the fiesta will also include selections from authentic native music, such as plenas and seises.

The native music is the product of Puerto Rico's historical heritage and it owes its characteristics to the groups of people who converged to form Puerto Rico.

From the Spaniard the Puerto Ricans received the large and small string instruments, such as the cuatro, tiple and guitar which went along with the Conquistadors all over the New World. These string instruments would accompany their coplas, romances, décimas, aguinaldos and other verses common to all Hispanic peoples.

The Indian natives of the Island used to dance and sing in ceremonies which they called areytos in their language. The music of the areyto was accompanied by the maraca, the guiro and a drum. All three instruments are indispensable to the Puerto Rican musical group or orchestra (the maraca is

a rattle and the guiro, also called carracho or guicharo, is a dried out gourd which is scraped to make a sharp, percussive sound).

Finally, the Blacks brought their large drum or bomba and their African rhythms.

Apart from the folkloric music and dance which is shared with other countries of Spanish background (romances, aguinaldos, coplas, nanas, etc.) the most vital native music at the present time is that of the seis (the meter is Hispanic, but tunes, interpretation, etc. are Puerto Rican) and the plena. Both are used to narrate current events of a topical interest, either of a humorous or tragic nature. So a plena or a seis may sing about the effects of a new auto inspection law or perhaps about the death of a local hero, such as Roberto Clemente.

Of the folkloric forms, the most vital is the décima<sup>1</sup> which the Puerto Rican Jibaro, or hill-dweller, uses to express the intimate concerns of his soul. Although the metrical pattern of the décima is a derivation of an ancient courtly form (there are examples of 14th and 15th century décimas in Spain), the Jibaro continues using it to express his concerns and has even taken it abroad. This author heard a décima live, over a Connecticut radio station, in

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<sup>1</sup>In the sense that new music is composed in the form: the romance, for example is still sung, but the songs were composed long ago, many of them in the 15th century; thus as far as being a vehicle for new music the romance is frozen in Puerto Rico.

which the verses sang about the slums, drugs, welfare, racial discrimination and other elements of the contemporary reality facing Puerto Ricans in U. S. cities.

The song of a décima is haunting, sad and melancholic, like a lamentation, like a complaint. In the words of María Teresa Babin, a noted author of books on Puerto Rican culture, the décima is

...the best [musical form] suited to the way of being of the Puerto Rican people. The peasant improvises décimas and hums them to give expression to his feelings, whose gamut extends from the most intimate and refined nuance to the most simple and festive. At times he accompanies the song on the guitar..., the guifcharo, the accordion, the treble guitar or the four string guitar. It is, however, frequent to hear washerwomen sing as they wash in the rivers, the falls or ravine, without any accompaniment but the water and the snapping of their hands on the rock where they wring out the clothes. On the mountain one hears the voice of the peasant in rhythm with the machete...or of the peon guiding the plow to open furrows in the land. (P. 70, The Puerto Ricans' Spirit...)

Musical expression is not just personal, but also collective; thus, on certain occasions Puerto Ricans celebrate with music which is specifically suited for the activity or occasion commemorated. The songs may be aguinaldos (a type of carol) or ceremonial music, like that of the baquines, or wakes of small children.

During Spanish days many religious festivities were celebrated with music. Of this former heritage only Christmas, Carnival and the Fiestas Patronales (Holidays

commemorating the Patron Saints of the Municipalities) show much vitality. Of the Fiestas Patronales, the one which best maintains the elaborate nature of the past is Loiza's Fiesta de Santiago (Feast of St. James), where people dress up in costumes of a bygone age and appear in a popular procession. The people of the town dance a Black baile de bomba, of African origin, in which men and women follow the rhythms face to face without touching one another, accompanied by percussion instruments such as maracas and drums.

This baile bomba negro is progressively being transformed as the old folks die and the young people incorporate elements from modern dances such as the pachanga into the bomba. These modifications are mainly due to the influence of television.

It must be pointed out that activities in music and dance have been and continue to be fostered at all levels by the Puerto Rican Government. This support is historical. During the time in which Puerto Rico formed part of the Spanish Empire, the authorities, both imperial and local, patronized the arts and music. Throughout the 19th century every town supported a municipal band which gave free concerts. Opera companies, famous orchestras and singers would come to Puerto Rico and travel all over the Island performing in the theaters of the towns.

The tradition has continued into this century, and Puerto Rico boasts several good orchestras, such as the Festival Casals Orchestra, the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, Arturo Somohano's Orchestra (all of these give concert tours in other parts of the world, as well) and many bands and popular music orchestras (Cesar Concepcion's, Pepito Torres') together with groups or conjuntos (El Gran Combo, El Trío Vegabajeno, etc.). Several towns and organizations maintain their own bands, such as the municipal bands and the Police Band. There are also dance and folkloric groups such as the Ballets of San Juan which perform to enthusiastic audiences.

Music also plays an important part in the educational system of the Island. In addition to being a required subject in the grade schools, the cultivation of music is fostered by the Puerto Rico Conservatory which provides training to promising students. Student music is also cultivated by amateur groups of excellent quality, such as the Coro de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, which goes on tour outside of Puerto Rico on occasion (basso Justino Díaz of Metropolitan Opera Company fame is a former member of this Coro). In addition to the Coro, there are numerous Tunas, which are student string groups of strolling musicians that thrive in the various institutions of higher learning.

Music also receives private support from people in the homes. Playing an instrument has generally been considered an indispensable part of growing up--the boys usually learn to play a string or band instrument, and, in those families that can afford it, the girls learn to play the piano.

As may be gathered from this narrative, Puerto Rico's rich musical heritage is a natural outcome of the way in which all levels of the society, public and private, have consistently supported and fostered musical concerns throughout the Island's history.

Some of Puerto Rico's outstanding musicians of the past and of the present are:

a) Composers

- Felipe Gutiérrez Espinosa (1825-1900)  
Manuel G. Tavárez (1843-1883)  
Julian Andino (1845-1920)  
Julio C. de Arteaga (1867-1923)  
Aristides Chavier (1861-1942)  
Braulio Dueno (1854-1924)  
Juan Morel Campos (1857-1896)  
Rafael Hernández (1929-1965)  
Silvia Rexach (1922-1961)

b) Performers

Elisa Tavárez de Storer - pianist

Jesús María Sanromá - pianist

Elias López Sobá - pianist

José Figueroa - violinist

Jaime (Kachiro) Figueroa - violinist

Graciela Rivera - Opera soprano

María Esther Robles - Opera soprano

Olga Iglesias - Opera soprano

Justino Díaz - Opera basso

Ruth Fernández - singer of popular and  
folkloric music

Bobby Capó - singer and composer of popular  
music

Myrta Silva - singer and composer of popular  
music

c) Others

Arturo Somohano - Conductor

Augusto Rodríguez - Choirmaster

Maria Luisa Muñoz - Musicologist and pianist

## PLASTIC ARTS IN PUERTO RICO

The visitor who arrives in Puerto Rico can readily appreciate the vitality and abundance of plastic art in the Island. From the massive fortresses of the colonial period to the beautiful murals, the numerous galleries, museums and churches, all of which bear testimony to Puerto Rico's rich artistic heritage.

The oldest examples of art on the Island are the petroglyphs, pottery, utensils and other relics of the Indians who inhabited Puerto Rico prior to the Spanish conquest. The petroglyphs show sketches of men or women who have very solemn expressions, almost grim. Some of the petroglyphs are over a thousand years old. The Indian idols, or zemfes, the stone collars, and utensils are carved with geometric patterns and also with humanoid and animal features. These Indians were absorbed by the Spanish settlers and their art died out, even though some of their crafts live on among the peasantry, who still make hammocks, utensils and tools not unlike those of the Tainos who inhabited Puerto Rico at one time.

The Spanish settlers who displaced and absorbed the Taino Indians in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries brought their artistic ways into Puerto Rico. The most impressive artistic manifestation from this colonial period is that of the official structures of the Imperial Order: the massive fortresses or castles and the Roman Catholic churches.

Examples of the fortresses would be Morro Castle, San Cristóbal castle and Fort San Gerónimo, all of which are in San Juan. Representative examples of the church architecture would be San José, the Cathedral of Santo Tomás de Aquino and El Convento, all of which are also in San Juan, and the church of Porta Coeli, in San Germán. All of these structures combine Spanish Gothic and Renaissance styles.

During this same period of time, most Puerto Ricans lived in the countryside in little houses set on stilts (called bohios) made from readily available native materials, such as palm trees and other woods. The colonial settlers had learned how to make this kind of dwelling from the Taino Indians. The bohios served their function well for a long time, and in fact, most of the dwellings in Puerto Rico were of this type well into the 19th century. In the 20th century economics have dealt a mortal blow to the bohios, which have disappeared entirely from the Island, having been displaced by functional structures made out of commercially obtained materials such as boards, zinc and concrete blocks.

The bohío, though well adapted for an island which is frequently battered by storms (the wind goes right through the bohío, and the stilts keep it up high away from the floods that accompany the storms; even if destroyed, a new bohío may be constructed from materials available in the immediate vicinity) does not last for many years, and this is the reason why the oldest example of a private dwelling in Puerto Rico is the foundation of Ponce De Leon's stone house of 1509.

The 18th and 19th centuries brought economic prosperity to Puerto Rico. People were now able to have more ambitious structures, and so one may find numerous examples of private homes and civil architecture which reflect Spanish patterns, up to and into the 20th century. The private homes were usually built around a courtyard or patio paved with bricks. This courtyard had a small well in the center and flowers and plants would grow in large pots which were placed along the sides of the courtyard. The rooms were large, had very high ceilings and opened up to a hall which gave way to the patio. The outside walls were stucco and had almost no ornamentation except for the flowers that grew in pots and lay on the balconies or hung from the small windows. The house had brick walls which were thick and strong enough to withstand the strongest hurricane. Spaniards had been making houses like these, especially in southern Spain, for centuries, and they found them well suited for the tropics, too.

Contemporary structures reflect the U.S. influence, especially in the functional architecture of the many hotels, commercial structures, high rise condominiums and private homes of the urbanizaciones (housing projects) which sprawl all over the suburbs of Puerto Rican towns.

PICTORIAL ART

The oldest examples of pictorial art in Puerto Rico, aside from the Indian relics, are European paintings that portray religious topics. These paintings (The Virgin of Bethlehem; Christ) have been in San Juan's San José church since the 16th century. Yet rather than being examples of Puerto Rican art, these are examples of European art in Puerto Rico.

At the same time that ecclesiastical authorities were importing paintings and other art from Europe, the native Puerto Ricans were developing modest examples of religious art in small wooden images of Roman Catholic saints called santos. These santos constitute the first manifestation of Puerto Rican pictorial art in post-Columbian times. Even though the santo folk tradition had been brought over from Spain by the first settlers, who were pious people, making santos soon developed along very particular lines distinct from what they had been in the Spanish peninsula.

Several local factors tended to reinforce the santo folk tradition in Puerto Rico. One was that the Indians already had a tradition of making religious idols, called zemies, which were personal deities. When these Puerto Rican Indians converted to Catholicism and intermarried with the Spanish, they carried over many of their old ways into the new order, including the use of personal images which the new faith exchanged for the old. Another was the fact

that Spanish priests were few in number and tended to stay in more populated areas of the Island, along the coastline, rarely venturing into the interior.

In this way Puerto Ricans developed their own religious tradition, a very distinct way of worship which was nominally Roman Catholic, but which incorporated many elements and attitudes of the Indian and other non-European faiths, such as the African ways of worship which were brought in by the slaves that were imported into the Island during and after the 16th century. Consequently, the santo acquired a spiritual importance of large proportions, and for many in the Island it had a quasi-divine nature whose worship could even displace that of the Main Catholic Deity.

Santos were made by excellent folk artists who passed on their craft from father to son for generations. Likewise, people who owned santos cherished them dearly, and passed them on from generation to generation. The santo tradition has been carried on into this century by the santeros (santo makers) who continue their art in spite of the competition they receive from store-bought mass-produced images made of plastic, porcelain or other materials.

The first known santero practiced his craft close to two-hundred years ago; his name was Tiburcio Espada, from San Germán. Some of Espada's work remains in spite of the ravages of time. The poor condition of Espada's santos has been aggravated by the many layers of paint their various owners have given them; nevertheless, one may still appreciate

the artist's delicate and expressive work.

In the present century (and indeed during a large part of the 19th century), the most famous Puerto Rican santero has been Don Zoilo Cajigas, of Aguada (1855-1961).

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Outside of the folk art of the santeros, one must wait until the 18th century for the first formal Puerto Rican artist, José Campeche (1752-1808). Campeche was the son of Tomás Campeche, a liberated slave, and María Jordán, a native of the Canary Islands. Young José first became interested in pictorial art working alongside his father, who was a decorator and bookbinder. As a child Campeche drew sketches with charcoal and also made small figures which were so good that he was able to sell them.

From these beginnings Campeche expanded his artistic endeavors and his work became more ambitious. Before long he was painting portraits of religious subjects and decorating altars in churches. Then, due to a stroke of fortune, Campeche's talent was able to better manifest its potential. Luis Paret (or Paredes) was a European-trained painter who was exiled to Puerto Rico for political reasons. Campeche soon came under his influence, and, in fact, the Spaniard gave young Jose the only formal instruction he was to receive in his life; yet, this instruction enabled Campeche to develop his talent. Campeche's works include religious, historical and contemporary topics. His paintings form part of the permanent collections of Puerto Rico's art museums, and other works of

his are found in several churches throughout the Island as well. Two of his best known portraits are: "Don Miguel de Ustariz" (1789) and "Lady on Horseback".

Campeche's modest beginnings served to inspire his countrymen. Because of him many Puerto Ricans became interested in formal art and followed in his footsteps. The most outstanding of these followers of Campeche was to be Francisco Oller y Cestero (1833-1917).

Francisco Oller was to become Puerto Rico's most important painter and the first to gain an international reputation. He was not a rich man, but he worked hard in order to educate himself in Europe. Oller first studied under Francisco de Madrazo in Spain's famous Escuela de San Fernando. After some time elapsed, Oller felt he had to further his education in Paris, which at that time was the cultural capital of the West. In Paris he studied under Couture and Courbet. With Courbet Oller began painting in the style of Realism, but later in his life he developed along the lines of Impressionism, according to the school of Manet and Pissarro.

In 1883 Oller presented an exposition of his works that included paintings of Spain's king and royal family, together with paintings of other Spanish dignitaries. This exposition also included other principal works by Oller.

Besides painting European subjects, Oller also painted many paintings based on Puerto Rican topics, such as landscapes and activities of rural life. His most famous painting is El Velorio, which depicts the wake of a baby in a country home.

Oller also established several free schools of painting and drawing after returning to Puerto Rico. From these schools many promising careers were nourished, a fact that points to their success.

Today Oller's paintings are exhibited not only in Hispanic museums, but also in Europe and the U. S. A.; and one of his paintings forms part of the permanent collection of the Louvre in Paris.

After Oller there have been many excellent painters in Puerto Rico. At the present time the Island is experiencing a boom in the plastic arts, a boom that is stimulated by activities generated in the University of Puerto Rico and in the public schools. The arts also receive generous support from the Puerto Rican Government. In addition. Puerto Rico has many galleries as well as opportunities for the artists to express themselves.

The following persons are among the most outstanding of Puerto Rico's present day artists: Olga Albizu; Myrna Báez; J. Balossi; J. Cajigas; F. Cervoni; Rafi Ferrer; Luis Hernández Cruz; Lorenzo Homar; Epifanio Irizarry; Domingo López; Carlos Marichal; Antonio Martorell; Augusto Marín; Jose Oliver; Miguel Pou; Jorge Rechani; Francisco Rodón; María Rodríguez Seneriz; Julio Rosado del Valle; Rafael Tufiño.